



Illinois State Board of Education

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NEWS

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State looks to students to help spread digital safety message

*State Education Superintendent Koch, Attorney General
Madigan and*

*Lt. Governor Simon focus on teaching children safe choices in
'digital world'*

SPRINGFIELD –The Illinois State Board of Education, Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Illinois Lieutenant Governor's Office today launched the third statewide Illinois Youth Digital Safety Contest to raise awareness about making safe and respectful choices through digital communications. The contest, open to students in grades kindergarten through 12, encourages students to create posters or electronic messages addressing this year's theme "Bystander Intervention," or the idea that students who witness bullying can take action against it.

"It's important that we raise awareness that all forms of bullying, and perhaps especially online bullying, is harmful and that we can all play a role in ending it," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "This contest can serve as one way of discussing online challenges and situations so that all our students can act safely and responsibly in the digital age."

Students in any public or non-public district can enter the contest by

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submitting an entry as a poster or in an electronic media format (video, podcast or slideshow). Districts must have all entries mailed to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and postmarked by March 30, 2012. Representatives from all three sponsoring government agencies will judge submissions.

Winners will be announced later in the spring and will be honored at a State Board of Education meeting and at an award ceremony at the Governor's Mansion. Winning entries will be shared on participating school and state websites. More about this year's contest rules, terms and conditions, can be found at: http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/internet_safety.htm.

"This contest can spark honest and thought-provoking discussions in the classroom that may lead to more mindful online behavior," said Lt. Governor Sheila Simon. "Students can help each other develop their sensibilities so that online bullying becomes completely unacceptable."

Under state law, school districts are required to incorporate Internet safety education at least once each school year beginning in third grade. Each local school district determines how to include Internet safety lessons into the classroom. Some recommended topics such as the safe and responsible use of social networking websites, chat rooms, bulletin boards and other means of communication on the Internet. It is also recommended that instruction includes information on recognizing, avoiding and reporting online solicitation by sexual predators, recognizing and reporting online harassment and cyberbullying and knowing the risks of transmitting personal information on the Internet.

Attorney General Madigan's Office offers age-specific Internet Safety Training Modules for educators that meet state law requirements. The Attorney General's Internet Safety Training Modules can be found on her website at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov, or on ISBE's website at www.isbe.net.

Attorney General Madigan emphasized that while technology opens opportunities, it also creates risks. Cyberbullying and online harassment are now the most common online risks to children. One in three teens reports having been harassed online, according to the Pew Research Center.

"I encourage students all across Illinois to get involved in this contest and use the power of art to share their thoughts and feelings about online harassment," said Attorney General Madigan. "Just their participation alone can help get other kids talking about these issues and could pave the way for greater understanding and solutions."

Attorney General Madigan's Office has provided Internet safety training and education to more than 202,810 parents, teachers, and students and 14,788 law enforcement professionals since 2006.

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Madigan also hosts a website to help children, teens, parents and educators learn about the dangers of cyberbullying. The "Stop Cyberbullying" website (www.ebully411.com) includes the latest news and statistics, frequently asked questions and a quiz to test online users' knowledge about cyberbullying. It also features an E-Info Hotline to assist victims and teach bullies to understand the impact of their actions. More information is available by calling the Hotline at 1-888-414-7678 or by e-mailing e-info@atg.state.il.us.

Sixteen students who earned first place in the 2011 competition were honored last year for work that focused on thinking critically about the ethical opportunities and challenges of the digital world.

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